

# The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, June 9. 1691.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether Persons deform'd with distorted Bodies can have Remedy, or be made straight again? if not, how may they best shun the Ridicule of their Deformity?

Ans. Though such Persons are destitute of a Corporeal Rectitude, and of all Means tending to an Effective Cure, yet they need not despair of a more advantageous Exchange, to wit, a well composed Mind and a rectified Judgment. A deformed Person is no more ridiculous, because Fools think him so, than the Moon a Monster, because a silly Cur barks at it. A wise Man thinks not a Jewel of less Value because kept in a mean Case. A generous Spirit may be lodg'd under any shape, and a deform'd Shape perhaps may be more conducive to virtuous Actions than a fair one, which usually is too much valu'd, to the Prejudice of the Minds Ornaments. All Bodies will be perfect in another World, and the Grave makes no distinction. He that ridicules a deform'd Person, charges his creator with Folly; and at the same time (tho' he has little Reason for't) is proud in being a greater Debtor to God and Nature than the other. One of the greatest Misfortunes a wise deform'd Man has, is, his over resenting Pity at the Deformity of a Fool's Mind.

Quest. 2. How does a Fright bring a drunken Man to his Wits?

Ans. The Spirits of the Liquor mounting into the Brain, intoxicate the Animal Spirits, which are chiefly lodg'd there, and occasion Drunkenness, but when the Heart is oppress'd by a Fright, the Animal Spirits fly to its assistance, and in their passage through the Blood, are purified and clear'd from the Intoxication, as the Salt-water by running through the Channels of the Earth loses its Salitude, and becomes fresh.

Quest. 3. A Friend of mine in a Garison besieg'd, dream'd that a Bomb was shot into the Town, and fell upon his House, and set it on fire, immediately he awak'd out of his Dream, got up, and call'd up all his Family, and left his House, which as soon as he had done, a Bomb was accordingly shot, and burnt his House to the ground. —Query, What Reason can you assign for this Dream, and the Effect of it?

Ans. Our Dreams are different as are their Causes: —The Natural Cause is the Constitution of our Bodies, as the Cholerick Dreams of Fire and Slaughter, and so of the rest: —The Imaginary Cause is when something has been done or thought on in the day-time, making a deep Impression upon the Animal Spirits, which the Imagination presenteth again when asleep, as the Souldier's Engagement causes him to dream of another fight: This is also Natural to Brutes, a Hound will dream of Hunting, &c. But the extraordinary Causes of Dreams (or rather Visions) are Angels, and these either good or bad, good when we are warn'd to avoid some imminent Evil, bad when the Suggestion tends to a greater Despair. Of the first was the Querist's Friend, of the last was Pope Innocent the Fourth, who was summon'd in a Dream, Surge-miser, & veni ad Judicium, Arise Wretch, and come to Judgment. We have several Instances of both Natures, which we can rank in no other Order than amongst the extraordinary Providences of God Almighty.

Quest. 4. Whether is it better to carry the War into the Bowels of the Enemies Country, or to guard the Frontier?

Ans. We challenge no pretensions to the Political Chair, nor think it convenient to Philosophize upon State Affairs, but rather refer to the (as yet unknown) measures which have been lately taken at the Congress at the Hague, whose happy Event, we hope, may be a full Answer to the Question. However, for the Curiosity of the Querist, we shall in short lay down what the Wits of France have offer'd amongst the rest of their Philosophical Conferences, which considering the present state of Europe, may not be altogether unwelcome. Those that were for guarding the Frontiers, urg'd, that both Leaders and Souldiers might better execute Orders at home,

the Inhabitants being ready to contribute what they can in Care, Pains, Money, &c. but in strange places they could not expect such advantages, but must labour under the difficulties of honest Guides, &c. Nature begins at home, every one would rather exert his utmost care and zeal for the preservation of his own Life, Wife, Children, and Effects, than for making designs upon another's Life, Goods, &c. How Invasions succeed, witness those in the Isle of Rhe, St. Honorat, and St. Marguerite and Lamate, whose unhappy Events confirm what is said before: —Those that were for carrying the War into the Enemy's Country argued thus. Two Gamesters resemble the invading and the invaded Prince, one whereof having begun to win, will no longer venture any thing of his own, but prosecutes the Game with the others Money, War well nigh pays it self in an Enemies Country: The Romans were always Victorious out of Italy, but were often beaten at home by the Gauls and Carthaginians, the English have been more fortunate in France than at home. Terror which gets half the Victory, is always on the Aggressor's part. —The French are fitter to attack the Enemy afar off, than to support his Eruptions into their Country, because the first requires such an Ardour and Impetuosity as is natural to them, and the second hath need of more patience than their Genius and Temper affords 'em. —I have mentioned this Conference on purpose to compare it with their present Actions and Temper; and for such other applications as Ingenious Loyalists may make of it, when the present Affairs of Savoy shall make good the latter part of the Character.

Quest. 5. Why a Dolphin follows a Ship until he is frighted away?

Ans. 'Tis not from the same reason as Sharks, and other ravenous Fishes do, who expect a dead Body, or a Prey, but from the great love and kindness which those sort of Fishes bear unto Man, the frequent Instances of which perhaps might give life to the Story of Arion, the Italian Musician, who being about to be slain for his Money, as he was sailing homewards, desired to play one Lesson on his Harp before he died, and so leap'd overboard, and light upon the back of a Dolphin, which carried him safe to his Native shore before the Ship got home, where he told the Matter, and the Marriners being examin'd confess'd it.

Quest. 6. Sailing near the Cape of Good-hope, I observ'd to all appearance several flashes of fire upon the Surface of the Water: Query, Was it really so or not, and if so, what is the Natural Cause thereof?

Ans. Paulus Biornomus residing in Island, sent an Account something like this to the Royal Society, and added, that they have great store of Brimstone there. We have also this Account from a Friend, that at the Bay of Biscay, which is about 200 Leagues off Scilly, the Water running off the Oars as they row along in the Night, seems to glitter and look as if it were on fire: The reason whereof we conceive to be this, the Sea being in all places (but more especially in some than others) repleat with sulphurous and saline Spirits, which by either the Motion of a Tempest, or the violence of the Oars, sets on work and emits these volatile Vapours in the Nature of a Flame, something near the Nature perhaps of our Modern liquid Phosphorus: So that we suppose what the Querist thought to be a flash of Fire, was rather the side of some rising wave, that had met with the aforesaid Violence, prepared and qualified in like manner.

Quest. 7. What is the meaning of these words, viz. And Saul went into the Cave to cover his feet?

Ans. 'Tis a modest expression of doing the Necessities of Nature. —By covering the feet, 'tis easily gather'd, that the manner of wearing their Apparel at that time was long, perhaps like that of the Turks and Grecians, whose Garments in that posture reach low enough to cover their feet.

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Quest. 8. How is a Kite suspended in the Air, when her wings are only expanded, and not in Motion?

Ans. From the same reason that a thin piece of Silver, Brass, Iron, &c. will swim upon the Water, viz. because a little Body possesses a great room; for if the Iron was contracted and beat into a Lump, it would sink, and if the Kite should gather her Wings to her Body, she would fall to the Earth.

Quest. 9. Where had Adam and Eve their Needles and Thred to sew their Fig-leaves together?

Ans. They used neither Needles nor Thred, for the Original word don't signify sewing, but wreathing or twisting: So that they took small Boughs and Leaves together, which they twisted, and wrapt about them to cover their Nakedness.

Quest. 10. Why is the Water in the Baths more hot than in other Springs or Rivers?

Ans. By reason of their passage through saline and sulphurous Minerals, whose Nature they Imbibe, and with whose Spirits they easily mix by reason of their Tenuity.

Quest. 11. Whether an Apprentice, being bound to the Husband, (the Husband dying) may be forced to serve out his time with the Widow, she keeping up her Husband's Trade?

Ans. The Widow is bound to teach him the Trade, either by taking some one of the same Profession into her House that is capable to do it, or by turning him over to another Master, otherwise there is no compelling him to serve out his Time for her Interest, if thereby he is deprived of the Opportunities of such an Information as might render him a Master (unless it be his own fault) at the Expiration of his Indentures: The Chamberlain is the proper Judge and Arbitrator in the Plea of both Parties.

Quest. 12. Why does the Scripture forbid us to wear Linsey-woolsey?

Ans. We are no where forbid it, 'twas a prohibition of the Jews amongst the rest of their Ceremonial Laws, which were all Shadows and Types of something to be fulfilled in the Messiah. This particularly was to resemble that simplicity and single heartedness, which is required of every Person, under the fuller Manifestations of the Gospel.

Quest. 13. Whether Fire be visible, or not?

Ans. The Supposition of its visibility, has made many Persons to conclude there is no Element of Fire, because not visible: But here a false Cause is assign'd, Air is not visible; and Fire is a more pure sort of Air rarified, and therefore less consistent with visibility. We see Coals, Sticks, Candles burn, &c. yet we see not the Fire, but the Nourishment of Fire. This Hypothesis is demonstrable from the Flame of a Candle, which affords Soot, and an Oily Substance, visible when joyn'd in the Inflammation, and visible when separate after extinguishment; but take away this Nourishment, and the flame of the Candle becomes invisible, because separated from gross matter.

Quest. 14. How do we call those things to mind that we have forgotten?

Ans. — Two ways, one is by the representation of Objects to our Senses: As for instance, my Mourning Ring puts me in mind of my Friends Death that gave it me. — The other is by a Chain or Connexion of Consequences treasur'd up in my Memory. As for example, A Discourse of my Friend's Death occasions that of another Persons, this discourse of another Person's Death may cause a recollection of his Vertues and Vices, and these may usher in the comparison of another Mans; now by running back this Chain of Inferences, I can bring to mind the Death of my Friend, which gave occasion to the rest of the discourse.

Quest. 15. Why will a Fish without Scales live longer than a Fish with Scales?

Ans. 'Tis observable, that Fish with small Scales, as Trouts, Tench, &c. have thicker skins than Scaly Fish have, as Charr, Dace, &c. which perhaps may hinder a perspiration of the Air longer, and defend them from the force and power of a contrary Element, as for Eels, Lampreys, &c. which have no Scales, 'tis doubted by some whether they may duly be rank'd amongst the number of Fishes, or whether they may not rather be termed Amphibious Creatures, not only from their long living out of the Water, but by their endeavour to hide themselves (when taken) amongst the deepest Grass, Moss, Leaves, or any other Covering, as has been very often experienc'd both by my self and others.

Quest. 16. Which of our Senses can we best spare?

Ans. Smelling, when it is lost by such means as don't at the same time prejudice the Taste, which sometimes happens, tho' tasting and smelling have commonly that dependance of, and affinity one with the other as the Eyes have, of which, one being wounded or lost, the other through the anguish often runs the same fate.

Quest. 17. Whether the Immortal Soul was breath'd into Adam with the Animal, at the same time, or before or after?

Ans. At the same time undoubtedly, unless you'll have him a Predecessor to Nebuchadnezzar, who acted sometimes the Man and sometimes the Beast. Adam could not properly be said be Adam, till he was a perfect Man, — God call'd a Council of the Trinity to make him a Man, not a Beast.

Quest. 18. What's the Original Cause of the Small Pox, and why more on the Face than elsewhere?

Ans. The Learned say there are two Causes, the Material and the Efficient; the former is the Impurity of the Menstrual Blood, which serves for nourishing the fetus in the Womb, where at first it draws the purest and sweetest blood, but when grown bigger it attracts the grossest with the thin. So that as Horfes once in their lives cast the Strangles, so Nature once purges and voids in Men that Menstrual Impurity, which being equally dispers'd over all the Body, and in small Quantity, hinders not its Function; the Efficient Cause is likewise common to every Body, to wit, Natural heat, which drives these Impurities outward, especially in the Face, because all the Organs of Sense terminating there, is fuller of Spirits, and consequently liable to a great attraction of those malignant Vapours.

Quest. 19. What's the reason that an Ox has longer Horns than a Bull, and yet a Weather shorter than a Ram?

Ans. Horns, Nails, and Hair are excrementitious parts, fed by Moisture, and expell'd by Heat, and are emitted proportionable to the redundancy of either Quality. The heat of an Ox is allay'd by Castration, or Gelding, but yet so much left as to emit the excrementitious Moisture, which by Gelding is more prevalent than before, because the heat digested much of that moisture which now is emitted in Horns, &c. but the Ram by gelding is depriv'd both of the redundancy of moisture and heat, and is left in an equal temperament of Body, being able by its little heat to emit its little moisture in Wool. 'Tis evident, that Sheep don't abound so much in those qualities as Bulls and Cows do, because some Sheep have never any Horns at all.

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